

NHFIRS BULLETIN

Outdoor Fires How Do You Code That?



For the fire pictured above the incident type would be 143-Grass fire. If this was brush or a mix of brush and grass, it would be coded as 142-Brush or brush-and-grass fire. That's the easy part.

The most common miscoding on these types of fires relates to the Property Use field. The property use refers to the actual use of the property where the incident occurred, not the kind of property or ownership. In this case, we are dealing with an open field which would be coded as 931-Open land or field. That sounds simple enough but imagine if the photo of this fire was taken from the porch of a single family home and the fire is on their property. Would that matter? It shouldn't.

When these types of fires occur on private land, there may be a tendency to code the property use as residential. The property use is often incorrectly recorded as 419- 1-or2-family dwelling in these situations. Whether it's a typical residential yard or a larger spread, such as the one in the photo, grass fires typically occur outside and need to be coded that way.

Other acceptable property use codes for grass fires like this would be 936-Vacant lot or 938-Graded and cared for plot of land, including parks, cemeteries and residential yards. Both are outside property uses.

To list the incident type as a grass fire and the property use as 1-or 2-family dwelling indicates that the fire occurred in (or on) the dwelling, which is usually never the case.

The area of fire origin for this fire would be 94-Open area, outside. The heat source could be a variety of things; however, recent data suggest that smoking materials (cigarettes, cigars, pipes, matches, etc.) are more likely to be the ignition heat source. Provided the grass is what was ignited first, the item first ignited here would be 72-Light vegetation (not crops).

When completing the Fire Module on any outdoor fire, the estimated total acres burned needs to be entered in the Acres Burned field. If the total was less than an acre, that field should be left blank and 'Less than one acre burned' should be marked. In any event, you cannot select 'None' for acres burned on most outdoor fires.

If there was an outdoor fire (Incident type codes 141-143 or 171-173) the area of damage is measured in acres. If there was not enough combustion to consume anything, the incident should probably not be coded as a fire.

As with all of the articles in the "How do you code that?" series, the information provided is based on typical situations. There may be unique incidents or situations where other codes may need to be used. If you encounter a unique situation or are unsure how to properly code an incident, we will be happy to assist you.

When it comes to grass fires or any situation, not coding incidents properly is doing nothing more than creating bad data. We all know how the saying goes – "Garbage in, garbage out." With good data we can correctly identify the problem and take actions to keep that problem from harming people, property or the environment.